

Message Text

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????INFO AMCONSUL LYON

AMCONSUL MARSEILLE

AMCONSUL NICE

AMCONSUL BORDEAUX

AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

AMCONSUL MARTINIQUE

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, FR

SUBJ: GAULLIST CANDIDATE WINS BY-ELECTION IN LE HAVRE

SUMMARY. LE HAVRE ELECTED JUNE 15 A GAULLIST (UDR) DEPUTY OVER HIS COMMUNIST (PCF) OPPONENT; THE UDR (ANTOINE RUFENACHT) TOOK 51.9 PERCENT OF THE VOTE WHILE THE PCF (DANIEL COLLIARD) TOOK 48.1 PERCENT. THE ELECTION WAS BITTERLY FOUGHT; SEVERAL NATIONAL POLITICAL LEADERS TOOK PART IN A STORMY CAMPAIGN WHICH MARKED A CLEAR DEMONSTRATION OF THE UNITED LEFT'S WILL AND ABILITY TO UNITE IN SUPPORT OF A PCF CANDIDATE. WHATEVER THEIR CURRENT PUBLICSQUABBLING, WHEN THE CHIPS CAME DOWN IN LE HAVRE, PCF, SOCIALISTS (PS) AND LEFT RADICALS (MRG) BANDED TOGETHER TO SUPPORT THE UNITED LEFT'S CANDIDATE; AN UNDETERMINED FACTOR IS THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE ADVANCE KNOWLEDGE THAT THE COMMUNIST WAS UNLIKELY TO WIN ENABLED THE LEFT TO PULL ITSELF TOGETHER. END SUMMARY.

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1. THE ELECTION: AFTER A HEALTH-RELATED RESIGNATION BY INCUMBENT UDR DEPUTY MAURICE GEORGES (SON-IN-LAW OF FORMER PRESIDENT RENE COTY), A NINE-WAY FIRST-ROUND RACE SAW THE FIRST-PLACE UDR, THE SECOND-RANKED PCF AND THE

LOSING PS CANDIDATES POSTING MARGINAL INCREASES IN THEIR HISTORIC STRENGTH IN THE AREA. THE MAJOR LOSERS WERE THE CENTRISTS AND THE PARTIES TO THE LEFT OF THE UNITED LEFT. STUNG BY THEIR DEFEAT, THE FIRST-ROUND CENTRIST AND "INDEPENDENT (CONSERVATIVE) GAULLIST" CANDIDATES DID NOT SUPPORT THE WINNING UDR CANDIDACY OF ANTOINE RUFENACHT. UNITED LEFT DISCIPLINE WAS STRONGER, WITH THE DEFEATED SOCIALIST FIRST-ROUND CANDIDATE MAKING A STRONG PITCH FOR PCF SECOND-ROUND CONTENDER DANIEL COLLIARD.

2. THE UNITED LEFT--"NOT JUST A SIMPLE LOCAL ELECTION": THE PS, SOME OF WHOSE DEPUTIES HAD URGED "CAUTION" ON THE PARTY'S NATIONAL LEADERSHIP, SPENT THE WEEK OF JUNE 6-13 IN A VIGOROUS ATTACK ON THE MAJORITY AND ITS LOCAL CANDIDATE. WHILE THE PS FURNISHED, AS FAR AS WE KNOW, LITTLE MATERIAL ASSISTANCE TO COLLIARD, THE SOCIALISTS PUT SEVERAL OF THEIR MOST IMPORTANT NATIONAL SECRETARIES INTO THE BATTLE. FIRST SECRETARY FRANCOIS MITTERRAND, HOWEVER, STAYED AWAY, CONFINING HIMSELF WITH A LITTLE-REMARKED APPROVAL OF THE UNITED LEFT'S TACTICS IN THE ELECTION.

3. THE MAJORITY--ALL THE STOPS WERE PULLED OUT: FOUR DAYS BEFORE THE ELECTION, PRIME MINISTER JACQUES CHIRAC, IN ONE OF HIS LAST APPEARANCES AS UDR SECRETARY-GENERAL, CAME TO LE HAVRE AT THE HEAD OF AN IMPOSING TEAM OF GOVERNMENT FIGURES. ALONG WITH MINISTER OF COOPERATION PIERRE ABELIN (SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE CENTER DEMOCRATS) GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN ANDRE ROSSI (ONE OF THE FOUNDERS OF THE LEFT REFORMERS) AND MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE CHRISTIAN

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BONNET (REPRESENTING THE INDEPENDENT REPUBLICANS), CHIRAC ATTEMPTED TO UNIFY THE LOCAL REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PRESIDENTIAL MAJORITY. UNABLE TO DO THAT, HE TURNED TO INVECTIVE AND STATED THAT BY NOT ELECTING MITTERRAND TO THE PRESIDENCY, "FRANCE ESCAPED ONE OF THE MOST DRAMATIC MOMENTS OF ITS HISTORY." WHILE THE CHIRAC SPEECH AND THE PRESENCE OF THE OTHER THREE MINISTERS AROUSED CONSIDERABLE COUNTER-INVECTIVE ON THE LEFT, MOST OBSERVERS FELT THAT RUFENACHT WOULD HAVE WON HIS SEAT EVEN WITHOUT HELP (UDR CONTROL OF THE SEAT HAS ONLY BEEN SERIOUSLY THREATENED ONCE IN THE PAST THREE ELECTIONS).

4. CONCLUSIONS AND COMMENT: NOT TOO MUCH MEANING SHOULD BE READ INTO THE ELECTION RESULTS; THE CONDUCT OF THE CAMPAIGN, HOWEVER, IS A USEFUL REMINDER THAT THE CHIRAC STYLE IN FUTURE ELECTIONS CAN BE EXPECTED TO BE VIGOROUS
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AND, WHEN NECESSARY, BRUTAL. THE UNITED LEFT WILL WORK TOGETHER WHEN THERE IS A CLEAR POLITICAL ADVANTAGE IN DOING SO. MITTERRAND'S RELATIVE RESERVE CAN BE CONSIDERED AS THE RESULT OF HIS PERCEPTION THAT THE UNITED LEFT WILL NOT BE RELAUNCHED UNTIL A SUMMIT MEETING OF THE THREE PARTY LEADERS TAKES PLACE LATER THIS WEEK, IF THEN. THE ELECTION WAS HARD-FOUGHT; THE EXPECTED WINNER WON.
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